



Safety Bulletin 106

Scaffolding collapse on a pedestrian walkway – HSE warning

The health and safety executive (HSE) is warning construction companies and property developers to ensure they provide safe scaffolding, which is regularly inspected. This follows the fining of two companies after a scaffolding collapse in Birmingham City Centre.

The incident occurred on the 13th December 2006. Scaffolding, measuring up to 50ft high and spanning 100ft along the side of a building, collapsed along Needless Alley at 6.40pm as it was being used by pedestrians.

SGB Services Ltd, based in Leatherhead, Surrey was fined a total of £4,000 and also ordered to pay costs of £6,000 at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on Friday 13th March 2009. This was after they had pleaded guilty to a breach of Regulation 8(b) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. SGB Services had been charged with not ensuring that the working platforms that they had installed were erected to ensure that components did not become accidentally displaced as to endanger other workers or passers-by.

In the same hearing, John Davies Interiors Ltd, of Century House Oldbury, was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay costs of £1,996 after pleading guilty to breaching Regulation 12(4) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. They admitted that it had not been ensured that the working platforms were not used in that position, as they had not been inspected within the previous seven days.

HSE Inspector, Mike Ford said:

“The incident placed pedestrians and workers at risk because the two companies had failed to provide a scaffold that was suitably tied to the building and failed to ensure that the scaffold was inspected regularly after the erection.

“All employers have a responsibility to ensure that safe working practices are in place, because failure to do so could well cost lives, as well as enforcement action from the HSE. It is extremely fortunate that no one was injured, as CCTV footage of pedestrians passing within seconds of the collapse clearly demonstrates, it could have been so much worse.

“Anyone attempting to work on that scaffolding would have been at high risk. Falls from height at work resulted in 45 deaths last year, of which 23 were in the construction industry. In addition, 3,750 workers were seriously injured after falling from height and 3,409 of those were employed in the construction sector.”

Notes

The maximum penalty, in a lower court (Magistrates') for a single breach of either regulation, is a fine not exceeding £20,000 or, for any offences committed after 16th January 2009, up to 1 year imprisonment. Cases heard in the higher (Crown) court, for offences committed after 16th January, carry an unlimited fine or up to 2 years imprisonment.



The Work at Height Regulations can be viewed at:

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si20050735.htm#8>

If you require any further information, clarification or assistance with the above, then please do not hesitate to contact us;

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Source – Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.gov.uk